Noise

Because of the relative remoteness and typography of the True North mine site, the lack of other foreseeable noise sources in the immediate vicinity, and the short-term nature of the project, noise generated by True North mine site operations would not be significant. Operation of a regional mill at Fort Knox, however, could cause other satellite mines to be developed that might generate noise that could be heard by residents of Cleary Summit. For example, mine site operations at the Gil prospect, approximately eight miles northeast of the Fort Knox Mill, might generate noise sufficient to be audible at Cleary Summit. Such noise would not be cumulative in the sense that it would combine with True North mine site noise because the latter very likely would be closed before the Gil prospect were developed, if at all. Such noise would be cumulative only in the sense that implementation of a regional mill concept could result in developing an infrastructure for access to the satellites that would result in traffic noise for a longer period of time than just from the True North project itself. Such noise, however, would not exceed the FHWA (2000) standard of 67 dBa for residences, churches, schools, and recreational uses and would not be significant in an aggregate sense.

Noise from trucks hauling True North ore to the Fort Knox Mill would combine with other noise sources, particularly traffic on the Steese Highway, and be audible to residents in the Cleary Summit vicinity. Such combined noise, however, would not exceed the FHWA standards for residential areas. Operation of a regional mill at Fort Knox could cause a continuation of this ore truck noise even after closure of the True North project as ore were hauled on the Steese Highway from other satellites such as the Ryan Lode prospect.

No foreseeable non-mining developments were identified that would significantly increase Steese Highway traffic noise in the vicinity of Cleary Summit. Only the slow, historical incremental increase in use of the Steese by tourists, hunters, and skiers can reasonably be expected. Between 1995 and 1999, AADT in this area actually *decreased* by 24 percent (Table 3). Thus, cumulative noise impacts from operation of a regional mill likely would not be qualitatively greater because the noise levels would not exceed the generally accepted noise standards for residential areas at Cleary Summit, but the duration of time over which such noise were generated could increase as new satellite mines were developed. Because ore truck hauling noise levels would not exceed the FHWA standards for residential areas, and because the additional vehicles attributable to development of satellite prospects would increase traffic only incrementally, and certainly not approach volumes anywhere near the number of vehicles for which the roads were designed, there would be no significant cumulative noise impacts.

Light Pollution

Light pollution caused by other developments, particularly near the City of Fairbanks, would be cumulative. Each additional outdoor light source would incrementally add to the existing light glow emanating from the Fairbanks area. For some entities (for example, a Cleary Dome-based northern lights viewing operator and the Poker Flats Research Rocket Range) the eventual cumulative effects of additional fugitive light sources could begin to affect their operations. At this time, light pollution is not a significant problem in the general Fairbanks area.

The regional mill concept, however, would mean that while mitigation techniques for the stationary lights of individual satellite projects would minimize light pollution, the potentially ongoing movement of trucks near residential areas in the Cleary Summit vicinity from a sequence of satellite developments could last for the remaining 11-year life of the Fort Knox tailings impoundment, and perhaps longer if the impoundment's capacity were to be enlarged. Light from the trucks would be similar to that from existing traffic on the Steese Highway and on Pedro Dome and Fairbanks Creek roads. While ore hauling traffic from True North or other satellite prospects would increase traffic, overall traffic levels would remain far below existing road traffic capacities.

The large majority of Fort Knox Mine traffic presently using Fairbanks Creek Road immediately in front of the Cleary Summit residential area would be diverted to use the new haul road approximately 690 feet further away and 160 feet lower in elevation than Fairbanks Creek Road. This would reduce trips on Fairbanks Creek Road by approximately 300 vehicles per day. This non-ore hauling traffic would continue to use the new haul road even after True North and other satellite projects were completed, thereby substantially reducing existing traffic levels closest to the residents on Cleary Summit.

Thus, developing an infrastructure for access to the satellites likely would result in increased vehicular use for a longer period of time than just for the True North project itself. Such use, however, would be well below the existing road traffic capacities in the Cleary Summit area. Light pollution from development of satellite prospects therefore would not be significant.

Other Resources

For several other resources, including, hydrology, water quality, fish, wildlife, cultural and visual resources, and recreation, True North cumulative impacts with other foreseeable developments would not be significant largely because of the distances between the locations, the relatively site-specific nature and small area of disturbance caused by mining projects in a regional context, and the requirements to mitigate impacts.

Other cumulative impacts often associated with resource-development projects would be absent from the True North project. Although some additional road construction